



ROCO In Concert

Legendary Love

Sat, Feb 10, 2018 • 5 pm • The Church of St. John the Divine

Scott St. John, *Concertmaster* • **Timothy Jones**, *Baritone*
Dan Visconti, *Commissioned Composer*
Mark Buller, *Commissioned Composer*

Mark Buller

Nursery Rhymes

ORCHESTRAL VERSION COMMISSIONED BY ROCO

---8 minutes--

Tombstone Songs

ORCHESTRAL VERSION COMMISSIONED BY ROCO

---8 minutes---

Antonín Dvořák (DVOR-zhak)

Legends, op. 59, b. 122

VI. *Allegro con moto* • IX. *Andante con moto*

---9 minutes---

William Grant Still

Wood Notes

I. *Singing River* (Moderately Slow) • II. *Autumn Night* (Lightly)
III. *Moon Dusk* (Slowly and Expressively) • IV. *Whippoorwill's shoes* (Humorously)

---18 minutes---

Dan Visconti (Vis-CAHN-tee)

Legendary Love (In honor of Christian Kidd)

Karl Blench, *copyist*

ROCO COMMISSIONED WORLD PREMIERE



EnCue by Octava Enabled

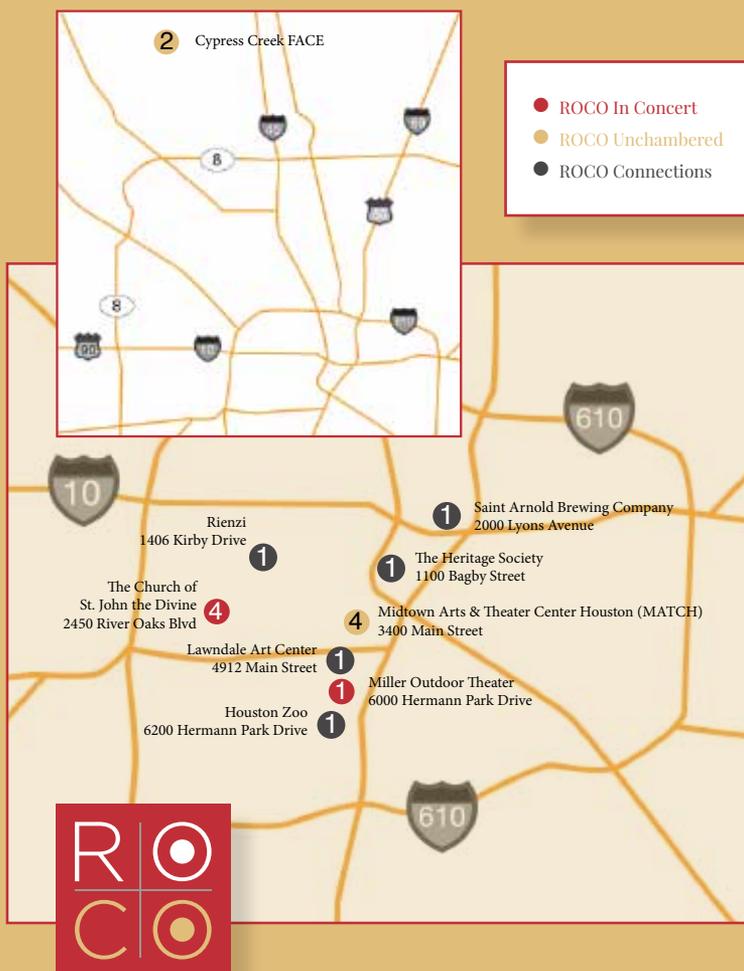
---10 minutes---

This evening's music will include the pieces above, not necessarily in this order, with a Take 5 (short intermission) and possible surprises.

Where We Play!

Join ROCO in exploring Houston and beyond through concerts that span the Southwest to the far Northern reaches of our area.

(Private salons in homes and galleries not listed)





a new level of concert engagement

ROCO is the first professional orchestra to premiere EnCue by Octava, a brand new smart phone app that's changing the concert-going experience. It delivers real-time program commentary from musicians and guest artists. Think of it like a director's commentary or VH1's Pop-Up Videos. ROCO has found a way to talk and play at the same time!

Here's how you can enjoy both our musical and literary conversation with you:

- 1.** Turn off the ringer on your phone, or place it in **"Do Not Disturb" mode**, so you can receive the Octava feed but keep your smart phone silent. You may also want to disable alerts on your phone during the performance.
- 2.** Go to the **App Store** or **Google Play**, search for EnCue, and download it to your phone*
- 3.** Open the **EnCue app**
- 4.** You can sign in with Facebook or your email if you want to create an account. This lets you save slides to view later, or share them to Facebook. If you'd rather not create an account, select **"skip"**
- 5. Select Houston** from the list of available cities
- 6.** Open the app before EnCue-enabled pieces (indicated by the EnCue logo), and press download. After it has loaded, press start and then the app will begin automatically advance the music starts!



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Spencer Park
Wendy & Tim Harris
Chair



Gavin Reed
Principal
Beverly & Bill Coit
Chair



Maiko Sasaki
Founding Consortium
Chair



Nathan Williams
Principal
Jeanie Flowers
in loving memory of
Dan Flowers
Chair

Horns

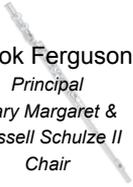
Clarinets



Sandor Ostlund
Principal
Leslie & Jack Blanton
Chair



Erik Gronfor
Founding Consortium
Chair



Brook Ferguson
Principal
Mary Margaret &
Russell Schulze II
Chair

Bass



Rebecca Powell Garfield
Kathy & Ed Segner
Chair

Flute/Piccolo



Makiko Hirata
Lisa & Rex Wooldridge
Chair



Courtenay Vandiver Pereira
Gretchen & Andrew McFarland,
Kate & Malcolm Hawk
Chair



Shino Hayashi
The Deshpande-Helmer Family
Chair

Celeste



Laurie Meister
Founding Consortium
Anne Harrington Chair
In memory of
Bruce Harrington



Richard Belcher
Principal
Denman/Newman Foundation
Chair

Cellos

Harp



Rachel Jordan
Amanda McMillian &
Benjamin Holloway
Chair



Kirsten Yon
Sharon Ley & Robert Lietzow
Barbara Burger
Chair



Aloysia Friedmann
Violin Consortium



Amy Thiaville
Janice & Barrett Green
Jarrod Gullett & Warren Dunn
Chair

Violin I



Deborah Tien Price
Mrs. Clare A. Glassell
Chair



Scott St. John
Concertmaster Consortium



Conductor

Kristin Wolfe Jensen

Principal

Sarah & Jeffrey McParland

in memory of Angeleen McParland

Chair

Daniel Chrisman

Jo Ann & Bob Fry

Chair

*Bassoon/
Contra Bassoon*

Craig Hauschildt

Christina Carroll

Susan Whitfield

Chair

Percussion

Matt McClung

Principal

Sally & Carl Frost

Chair

George Chase

Diane Simpson, in loving

memory of Don Simpson

Vivie & Chris O'Sullivan

Chair

Alecia Lawyer

Principal

Mrs. Paul N. Howell

Chair

Spring Hill

Founding Consortium

Chair

Brandon Ridenour

Principal

Lori & Joseph Flowers

Chair

Trumpets

Jason Adams

Oboe/English Horn

Suzanne LeFevre

Co-Principal

Martha & Tom Bourne,

Mimi Reed McGehee

Chair

Meredith Harris

Kit Gwin

Chair

Violas

Thomas Hultén

Principal

Melissa & Mark Hobbs

Chair

Mark Holley

Trombones

Matt Dane

Co-Principal

Mills & Steve Toomey,

Kerry Lynch & Dean Slocum

Chair

Lorento Golofeev

ROWBC,

in memory of Sudy Zane

Chair

Pasha Sabouri

John Bradshaw Jr.

Chair

Tammy Linn

Founding Consortium

Chair

Kana Kimura

Ann & Randy Fowler

Chair

Violin II

Rasa Kalesnykaite

Principal

Ugo di Portanova

Chair

Melissa Williams

Mimi Lloyd

Chair

Mary Reed*

** Available for
sponsorship.*





Featured *Artist*

Scott St. John,
Concertmaster



Scott St. John lives in London, Canada with his wife, Sharon Wei, and daughter, Julia. Scott was a member of the St. Lawrence String Quartet and faculty member at Stanford University for seven years, from 2006 – 2013. From 1999 - 2006, Scott was Associate Professor of Violin at University of Toronto,

and founded the Felix Galimir Chamber Music Award for U of T students.

Currently Scott coaches chamber music at Western University (Canada), plays chamber music at the Marlboro Music Festival (Vermont), and serves as concertmaster for ROCO. Scott is a partner in the new Rebelheart Collective at London's Aeolian Hall, an innovative chamber orchestra and youth mentorship program connected with the El Sistema movement.

August 2017 will mark the debut of a new "Western 360" chamber music festival at Western University in London Ontario. As artistic director, Scott is organizing a weekend of concerts and workshops for students, with an emphasis on multi-cultural experiences and wellness activities.

Concert highlights of the past year include a "Canada 150" recital of early Canadian music in Calgary with pianist Katherine Chi, a performance of Peteris Vasks "Distant Light" at Scotia Festival, and many chamber music performances with the Enso Quartet in California.

A recent recording of Mozart's Symphonia Concertante with his sister Lara St. John won a Juno Award for best recording: solo with orchestra. Working with composers has been important throughout his career; Scott has worked with John Adams, Charles Wuorinen and Oswald Golijov in the US, and Arsenio Giron, Gary Kulesha, Elizabeth Raum and many others in Canada.

Scott began his violin studies at age three with Richard Lawrence, in London. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied violin with David Cerone, Arnold Steinhardt, and chamber music with Felix Galimir. Current non-musical activities include serving on the boards of the London Organic Food Co-op and Transport Action Ontario. Scott also supports HanVoice, a lobby organization for North Korean refugees in Canada.



Featured *Soloist*

Timothy Jones, *Baritone*

American Bass-Baritone Timothy Jones enjoys a reputation as a charismatic presence on operatic and concert stages throughout the United States, Europe and South America. The Boston Globe hailed his voice as “stentorian and honeyed” and the Chicago Tribune called his “complete connection with the text extraordinary.” The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review praised him for his theatricality, noting that he “relished the dramatic possibilities of the songs’ text and music.” His eagerly anticipated performances combine intelligent musicianship, commanding vocal technique and a unique ability to connect with audiences. Highlights of the 2016-2017 season include performances with Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Ars Lyrica Houston, University of Houston Brahms Festival, and the ROCO in Houston.



A distinguished concert performer, Mr. Jones has soloed with the Cleveland Orchestra singing Handel’s Messiah and Bach’s St. Matthew Passion. He has also performed with Boston Baroque, Baltimore Symphony, St. Petersburg Chamber Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Houston Symphony, New Mexico Symphony, New Haven Symphony, Portland Symphony, Saginaw Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Utah Symphony, Wichita Symphony Orchestra and the Virginia Symphony. His repertoire includes Bach’s St. John Passion, Haydn’s Lord Nelson Mass, Mozart’s Requiem, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Verdi’s Requiem and “A Sea Symphony” by Vaughn Williams.

Mr. Jones is widely celebrated as an enthusiastic champion of new and contemporary music. His tour de force performance of “Eight Songs for a Mad King” by Peter Maxwell Davies was called “an amazing feat, making unnatural demands seem natural ... bizarre behavior coalesced into a sympathetic portrayal.” (The Salt Lake Tribune) He has commissioned and premiered numerous compositions by composers Derek Beryl, Robert Avalon, James Balentine, Laura Carmichael, John Vasconcelos Costa, Kevin Puts, Marcus Maroney, Pierre Jalbert, Karim Al-Zand, Anthony Brandt, Kieren MacMillian, David Passmore, David Cutler, Jeffrey Goldberg, David Heuser, Doug Opel, and Jeffrey Nytch. His annual appearances with Kevin Noe and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble are a highpoint of the season. The Salt Lake Tribune raved over his performance of Argento’s “A Waterbird Talk” conducted by Keith Lockhart, stating “Jones was a marvelous singing actor...his wry enjoyment was contagious.” His performance of Pulitzer Prize Winning Composer Kevin Puts’ Einstein on Mercer Street is featured on PNME’s recent recording “Against the Emptiness”. Other recordings include “Drunken Moon” and “The World of Ruth Crawford Seeger”.

Mr. Jones is an alumnus of Centenary College and the University of Michigan. He is currently a professor of voice at the University of Houston Moores School of Music.





Featured *Composer*

Dan Visconti,
Composer



Active as a composer, concert curator, and writer on music, Dan Visconti is updating the role of the classical musician for the 21st century as he creates new projects in collaboration with the community. For his ongoing initiatives to address social issues through music by reimagining the arts as a form of cultural and civic service, Visconti was awarded a 2014 TED Fellowship and delivered a TED talk at the conference's thirtieth anniversary.

Visconti's musical compositions are rooted in the improvisational energy and maverick spirit of rock, folk music, and other vernacular performance traditions — elements that tend to collide in unexpected ways with Visconti's classical training, resulting in a growing body of work the Plain Dealer describes as “both mature and youthful, bristling with exhilarating musical ideas and a powerfully crafted lyricism.”

Commission credits include works written for the Kronos Quartet, Branford Marsalis, eighth blackbird, Opera Philadelphia, the JACK Quartet, Alarm Will Sound, Da Capo Chamber Players, Scharoun Ensemble of the Berlin Philharmonic, Silk Road Project percussionist Shane Shanahan, guitarist Jason Vieaux, soprano Lucy Shelton, and many others. His music has been performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Los Angeles's Disney Hall, London's Barbican Theatre, and Sydney Opera House. He has also held composer residencies including those with the California Symphony, Arkansas Symphony, and Metropolitan Opera.

Visconti's music has been recognized with the Rome Prize, Berlin Prize, and awards from the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, Fromm Foundation, Naumburg Foundation, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is a contributing writer for the Huffington Post and has recently had speaking engagements at the Clinton School for Public Service, the National Archive, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Visconti currently serves as Director of Artistic Programming at Chicago's Fifth House Ensemble and works with young musicians at the ensemble's annual Fresh Inc Festival on cultivating musical careers in line with their own unique vision and values. He is also Artistic Advisor at Astral Artists, where he works to develop the next generation of classical music leaders.



Featured *Composer*

Mark Buller,
Composer



The music of composer and pianist Mark Buller has been performed in a wide variety of locations: from Carnegie Hall to the Menil Collection, from festivals in Italy, Cyprus, and Colombia, to performance spaces in Munich and Nagano. He has been commissioned by a wide range of organizations, including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera (for two 45-minute operas, an extended choral work, and numerous art songs), the Houston Symphony, and the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. For two years he was a member of the Da Camera of Houston Young Artist Program, which also commissioned a number of chamber works.

Buller's three operas to date (all with libretti by Charles Anthony Silvestri) have been performed a combined 190 times, and his art songs have been performed around the world. His chamber works have won awards as well: *Regressive Variations* won the national Rapido! Composition Contest, and *String Quartet No. 3* was the winner of the Sarofim Composition Award. Recent performances include *The Songs of Ophelia* by the Atlanta Symphony; *Motion Studies* by the Atlanta Chamber Players, Boston Musica Viva, *Voices of Change* (Dallas), and *Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings*; and various art songs around the country. Additionally, the choral work *Overboard*, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera with a text by Leah Lax, will be the centerpiece of a major new exhibit at the Australian National Maritime Museum. Mark's current projects include a concerto for English horn and strings, an electroacoustic chamber opera, and numerous art songs.

Buller received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Houston, where he studied with Marcus Maroney and Rob Smith. He previously studied with composer Dan Forrest and pianist David Lehman.



Nursery Rhymes



1. **JACK SPRAT**
Jack Sprat could eat no fat,
His wife could eat no lean;
And so between the two of them
They wiped the platter clean.
2. **ELSIE MARLEY**
Elsie Marley has grown so fine
She won't get up to serve the swine
But lies in bed 'till eight or nine
And surely she does take her time.
3. **LITTLE JACK HORNER**
Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plumb,
And said, "Oh, what a good boy am I!"
4. **THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN**
There was an old woman
Lived under a hill;
And if she's not gone,
She lives there still.
5. **GOOSEY, GOOSEY, GANDER**
Goosey, Goosey, Gander,
Where shall I wander?
Upstairs, downstairs,
And in my lady's chamber
There I saw an old man
Who would not say his prayers.
Take him by the left leg,
Throw him down the stairs.
6. **JOHNNY SHALL HAVE
A NEW BONNET**
Johnny shall have a new bonnet,
And Johnny shall go to the fair;
And Johnny shall have a blue ribbon
To tie up his bonny brown hair.

7. **LITTLE TOM TUCKER**
Little Tom Tucker,
He sang for his supper.
What did he sing for?
Why, white bread and butter.
How can I cut it without a knife?
How can I marry without a wife?
8. **LULLABY**
Rockabye baby,
The cradle is green;
Father's a nobleman,
Mother's a queen.
And Betty's a lady,
And wears a gold ring;
And Johnny's a drummer
And drums for the king.
9. **CROSS PATCH**
Cross patch, lift the latch,
Sit by the fire and spin;
Take a cup,
And lift it up,
Then call your neighbors in.
10. **BONNY LASS,
PRETTY LASS**
Bonny lass, pretty lass,
Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shall not wash dishes,
Nor yet serve the swine;
Thou shalt sit on a cushion,
And sew a fine seam;
And thou shalt eat strawberries,
Sugar, and cream!
11. **POLLY PUT THE
KETTLE ON**
Polly put the kettle on,
We'll all have tea.
Sukey take it off again,
They're all gone away.





1. **MR. PECK**

Here lies a Peck, which some men say
Was first of all a Peck of clay;
This wrought with skill divine, while fresh,
Became a curious Peck of flesh.
Through many forms its Maker ran,
Then adding breath made Peck a man;
Full fifty years Peck felt life's troubles,
'Till death relieved a Peck of troubles;
Then fell poor Peck, as all things must.
And here he lies, a Peck of dust.

2. **SOLOMON PEASE**

Under this sod, beneath these trees,
Lyeth the body of Solomon Pease.
Pease is not here, but only his pod.
He shelled out his soul, which went
straight to God.

3. **MARY JANE**

She was not smart,
She was not fair,
But hearts in grief for her are swellin';
And empty stands her little chair;
She died of eatin' watermelon.
[Sic; original spelling]

4. **MARTIN ELGINBRODDE**

Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde:
Have mercy o' my soul, Lord God.
As I would do, were I Lord God,
And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.

5. **ANN MANN**

Here lies Ann Mann
Who lived an old maid
But dies an old Mann.

6. **OLD CLERK WALLACE**

The children of Israel wanted bread
And the good Lord sent them manna.
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife
And the Devil sent him Anna.

7. **JONATHAN BLAKE**

Here lies the body
Of Jonathan Blake;
Stepped on the gas
Instead of the brake.





Clef Notes

by Andrea Moore



Mark Buller

Nursery Rhymes and Tombstone Songs

Adapted from the composer's own work are these pieces by Mark Buller. *Nursery Rhymes* was originally written for piano; the composer writes, "These eleven short songs were written at the request of my friend and colleague, baritone James Rodriguez. The texts [in program] come from an 1881 book, collected and illustrated by Kate Greenaway, an English writer of children's books. I selected some well-known nursery rhymes and some a bit more obscure, and attempted to set them to music in such a way that might suggest English folk song." Commissioned by ROCO to orchestrate them, Buller adds, "I was thrilled to have the opportunity to orchestrate these two works for ROCO and the wonderful bass-baritone Timothy Jones. The process of orchestrating is a lot like adding color in a coloring book: an artist might see black outlines and visualize what colors could enliven the page. Similarly, it's thrilling as a composer to add color, a sense of dimension to the part, to bring it to life."

First written for soprano and piano, Buller writes of *Tombstone Songs* that it was "written for the wonderful soprano Julia Fox, who sang in the premieres of my first two operas and for whose voice I knew I just had to write a song cycle. Julia asked for the cycle as part of her planned tour of Texas, on which she'd sing works entirely by composers from the state. I decided to write a comic song cycle, for several reasons: it's easy to write dark, brooding art songs, and they're often great; but balance is always needed, program-wise, and what's more, there just aren't enough comic art songs out there. So I began reading through collections of funny poetry and was struck by a few tombstone inscriptions -- real, etched-in-stone epitaphs -- whose dry wit and sardonic cynicism convinced me. A bonus for me as a composer was that their brevity allowed me to create a larger number of short songs -- almost like a tasting menu. As I worked on the set, I was careful not to get too carried away with dark humor. Rather, I tried to be careful to infuse them with a sort of poignancy that evoked the character of the people whose tombstones bore such arresting memorials. Put simply, I tried as hard as I could to avoid trivializing their various demises. In the end, I hope my little tributes allow these nearly-anonymous people to live on in our memories."

Of this commissioned orchestration, the composer adds, "As with the set of *Nursery Rhymes*, it's been wonderful to 'fill out' the colors of these songs. I chose to write for single winds here rather than pairs, in part to create an atmosphere appropriate to the tenor of these texts."

Antonin Dvořák
Legends, op. 59, b. 122



Composers have long engaged in “self-borrowing,” rearranging and cutting and pasting from their own existing pieces to create new ones. Such borrowings have, among other things, allowed overworked composers like Bach to meet their quotas. Perhaps more importantly, arranging small-scale works for larger forces gives them an entirely new character and extends their performance opportunities.

Legends (Legendy), which originated as a piano duet, is one such example. Dvořák is best known for his orchestral and chamber music; his piano works tend to be smaller in scale and ambition, with an emphasis on dance forms. Like *Legends*, his two famous sets of *Slavonic Dances* for orchestra both originated as piano duets; those pieces showcased Dvořák’s commitment to Bohemian source material, and their arrangements demonstrated his remarkable instinct for orchestration. *Slavonic Dances* became popular throughout Europe and helped make the composer’s reputation.

Legends is more reflective, and over its ten movements alternates quickly among keys, moods, and orchestrations. On this program, ROCO plays movement No. 6 and No. 9. Each movement has a slightly different orchestration; while both use pairs (or more) of woodwinds and a typical string section, No. 6 calls for two trumpets and harp, while No. 9 calls for three trumpets and timpani. The character of the two movements is quite different. No. 6, in C-sharp minor, is evocative of Dvořák’s dance-based music with its rippling triple meter; it may remind some listeners of Dvořák’s fellow Czech composer, Bedřich Smetana, and his tone poem, *The Moldau*. The opening section of No. 9, in D major, is built on the repetition, rather than variation, of its opening phrase, which is passed around the orchestra in close canon. There is a shift into D minor that marks the short B section, followed by a return to the opening material key. During that quick transition, the piece briefly pushes at its genteel bounds, evoking Dvořák’s larger orchestral works through dynamics and texture. Of these pieces, Brahms wrote to the publishing house Simrock, “[Tell Dvořák] how perpetually delighted I am with his *Legends*. It is a charming work and the composer’s fresh, merry, and profuse inventiveness is enviable.”



William Grant Still

Wood Notes



Photo by Maud Cuney-Hare

The American composer William Grant Still was born in Mississippi in 1895; his father was a bandmaster and his mother an educator. After studying the violin as a child, he attended Wilberforce University and the Oberlin Conservatory, learning to play most of the orchestral instruments and taking up composition. His subsequent work in commercial music and arranging was simultaneous with his ongoing compositional training, first with George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory, and privately with Edgard Varèse. Among his many musical achievements and honors is his informal title as “The Dean of Afro-American Composers,” and a long list of “firsts”: the first African-American to conduct a major American orchestra, to have an opera produced by a major American company, and many more.

He was a prolific composer for orchestra especially, writing five symphonies, nine symphonic poems, and a number of orchestral suites. *Wood Notes* is one such suite, written in 1947 and based on poems by J.M. Pilcher, a Southern poet, journalist, and social worker. Still was interested in developing an “American” musical sound, and like Dvořák during his stay in the United States, first worked with spirituals as source material. Although this piece post-dates Symphony No. 1 by many years, it resembles some of Dvořák’s orchestral works in its use of woodwinds, and in both composers’ use of certain scales to depict “Americanness”. The movements have programmatic titles: *Singing River*, *Autumn Light*, *Moon Dusk*, and *Whippoorwill’s Shoes*. This four-movement structure suggests the outline of a symphony, although Still did not label it as such, and the traditional fast-slow-dance-fast order of movements is not quite followed here. *Wood Notes* ends on a humorous note, following a lyrical opening movement, a delicate second movement in which the woodwinds especially shine, and a dreamy, sometimes impassioned third movement (the piece originally had five movements). Although Still and his contemporary, Aaron Copland, had remarkably similar career paths, they were often critical of one another—one scholar has noted Still’s criticism of Copland for the latter’s imitation of European modernist music, and Copland’s of Still for Still’s conservatism. Nonetheless, in the final movement of *Wood Notes*, their mutual influence seems clear.

A review of a 1948 Chicago Symphony performance of *Wood Notes* reads in part, “There can be no question that of all the Negro composers in our country, Mr. Still is the most remarkable. He possesses a fund of melodic ideas, his harmony is sometimes in the modern manner, and his handling of the orchestra is expert and, occasionally, original and brilliant.”



ClefNotes

by **Andrea Moore**

ROCO with composer Dan Visconti

Q: In the program notes to this new piece, you mention that you've written other works that blur the boundaries among genres. What are some of those pieces?

A: There are several examples. One of my earliest works, *Black Bend*, written originally for string quartet and also in a version for orchestra, makes the ensemble sound like an amplified blues band. My first opera was commissioned by Opera Philadelphia and an experimental cabaret troupe called the Bearded Ladies, so the resulting work about Andy Warhol played with the ideas of “high” and “low” art. My piece *Ramshackle Songs* is a collection of Tin Pan Alley-inspired 32-bar songs that all extend and overlap each other in different, weird ways. And my recent concerto for Grammy-winning guitarist Jason Vieaux, *Living Language*, is something of a tour through music history, starting with chant-like murmurs and slowly transforming a central motto through the carnic sitar influence, middle eastern oud, all the way to contemporary jazz, rock, and funk.

To me the really interesting space to be—where people are listening closest—is in-between these genres we've come to appreciate, in a space where for a moment anything might be possible.

Q: This piece requires the orchestra to sing and recite—have you written anything for a “singing orchestra” or other ensemble before? Did you have any concerns about doing so here?

A: I'm a composer who frequently employs all kinds of extended techniques for various reasons—to make a guitar sound like a sitar, or to add a percussive element to a melodic instrument's arsenal that enriches that part's sonic palette, or as in this case for dramatic effect. The chanting in this piece is very simple and by no means the most daring thing I've done, yet it had to be handled very gracefully due to the subject matter. I tried using it with music as underscore, but ultimately I decided to use the text as a coda, a kind of epilogue after the music has ended to send us off with Christian's words blossoming forth in this particular, communal kind of way—taking a really personal love poem and making it a kind of chant within *ROCO* but also without to the Houston community who fostered *The Hates and beyond*.

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Q: What is your personal relationship with punk, if any?

A: I grew up loving punk rock, first in some of its 1990s latter-day concoctions and subsequently artists like the Clash, Dead Kennedys, and of course The Hates. I'm also an electric guitarist, so a relationship to guitar and the sound of punk rock is always in my bones.

Q: The program notes describe the piece hitting a rhythmic drive, yet the whole piece uses a lot of mixed meter. Can you talk about the relationship between the driving, 4/4 or 2/4 meter we might expect from punk, and the more unsteady feeling of mixed meter?

A: When I wrote this piece, I figured everyone would expect something fast and loud in 4/4--something like a punk rock song. Christian already did that better than I could do, so as I became inspired by his surprisingly tender love poetry, I decided that what might be really special would be to capture the epic spirit of a medieval romance, the kind of love that is immortalized in legends and folk songs sung by minstrels and troubadours. So a lot of the rhythms are more lilting, seldom imitative of a big rock sound--but at times the strings sound like a strummed lute with some intricate pizzicato passages!

Q: There's a fair amount of freedom in the piece--uncued, staggered entrances, performers' individual decisions, and so on. Can you talk about that--is it a reflection of a punk ethic, or an accommodation of the conductorless ensemble, or something else?

A: The freedom of the piece is the main way I engaged the punk aesthetic, since as mentioned I already decided the musical material of the piece would be perhaps more lyrical; this coupled with ROCO's conductorless status made for some interesting opportunities to treat the orchestra more like a band. I could let ROCO's players shine as soloists within the group and animate certain simple, repeated riffs with a textural complexity and beautiful roughness that reflects a very punk non-conformist aesthetic, for what is ultimately a very sweet piece--just like those who know him will tell you that Christian is such a sweet person and a gift to Houston's musical community.

I'm no stranger to creating music that blurs the lines between classical and other genres, so creating an orchestral tribute to the Hates frontman and local Houston legend, Christian Kidd, sounded like an idea I couldn't wait to dive into. After all, the

Hates (one of the pioneering bands of punk rock) were really all about love, and after guitarist and lead vocalist Kidd underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatment, the piece took on an even greater urgency. While searching for a way in to a fitting tribute, I noticed some of Christian's



beautiful poetry he wrote for his partner, which he posts frequently on Facebook. The poems have a kind of characteristic outlaw balladry one might expect of Kidd, but they also harken to a more ancient minstrelsy, or perhaps troubadour songs.

Beginning with the timeless sound of the sea moving in waves throughout the orchestra, my new work “Legendary Love” begins with the harmonies of a distant love ballad, gradually taking on the more assertive, gritty rhythmic drive more typical of The Hates’ musical style, culminating in musicians singing and speaking text written by Christian:

***Being in love can emulate
Liberating in a way
Flowing forth like the fountain of youth
Filling my heart to say
I poured my hopes into endless hours
Stirring my dreams to become
Basking in your beauty
It changed me into someone
An inspired self-expression.***

One of the few conductorless orchestras, ROCO’s virtuosity makes the ensemble more like a band, and the piece develops this metaphor to the fullest, with sections where musicians react off one another for a thrilling, edge-of-your-seat experience that unfolds differently at each performance—capturing the improvisatory wildness and expressive urgency that makes Christian’s musical contributions to Houston and beyond so enduring.

- Dan Visconti (2018)

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The Wonderful English and Oz



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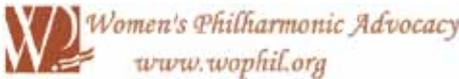


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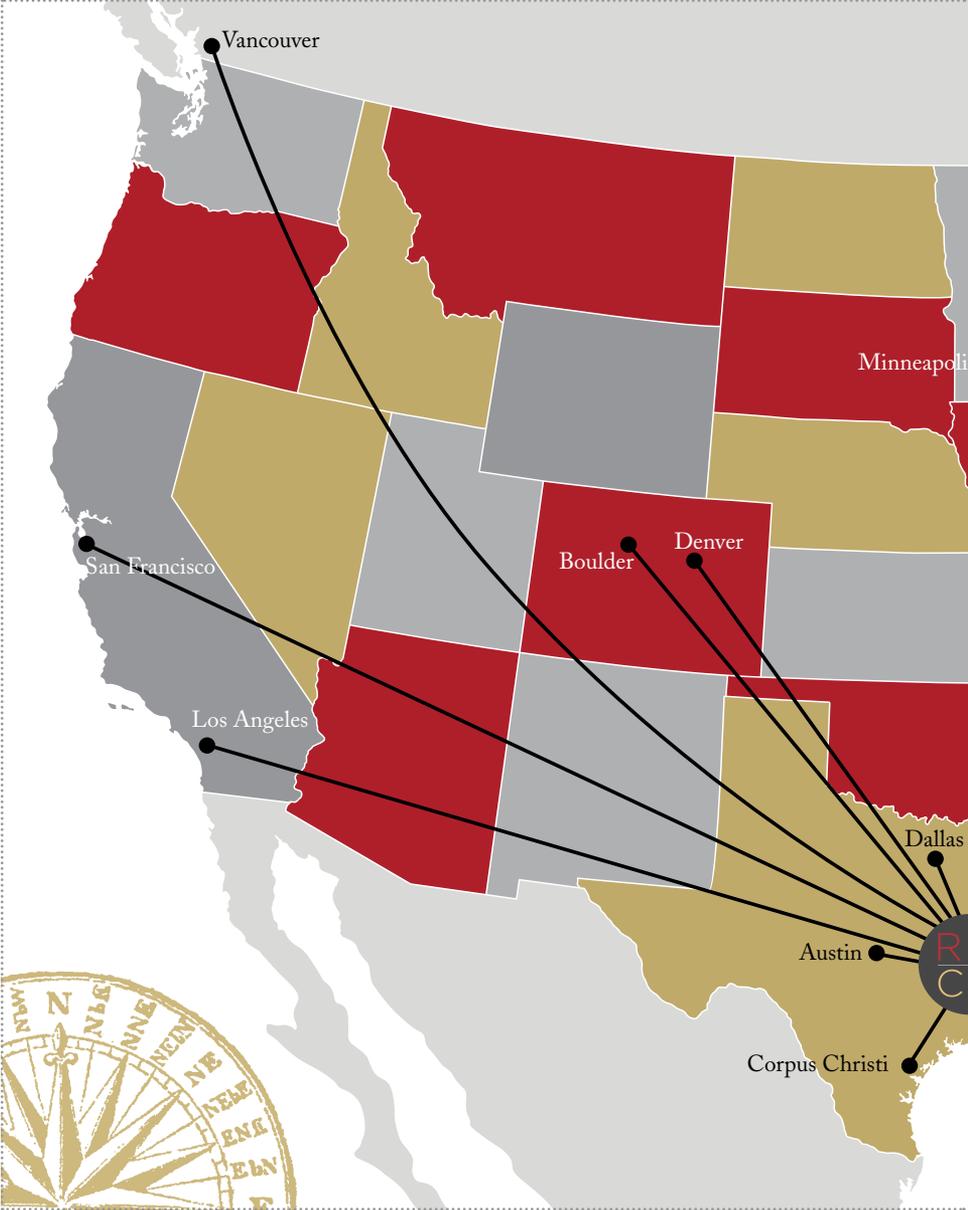
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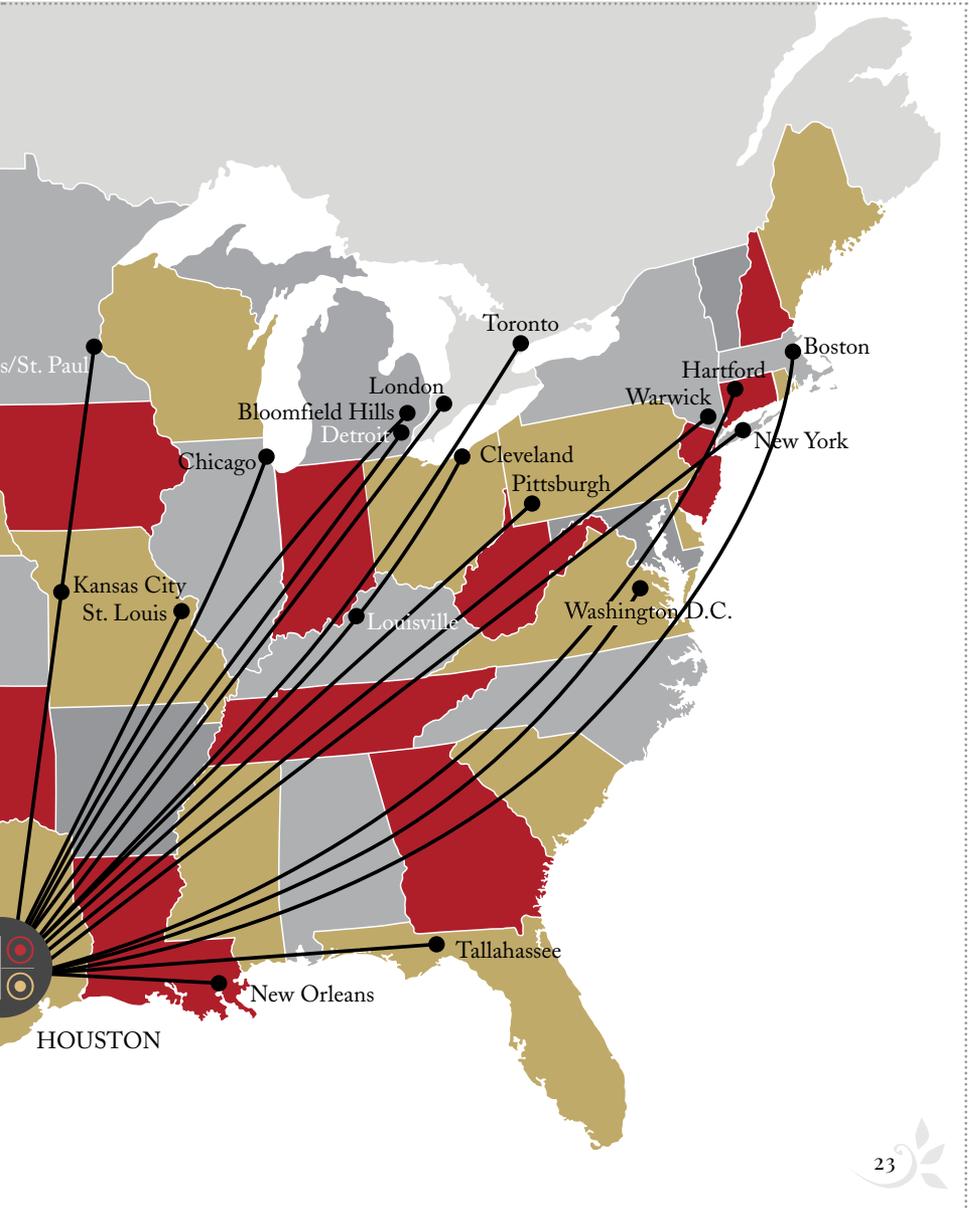
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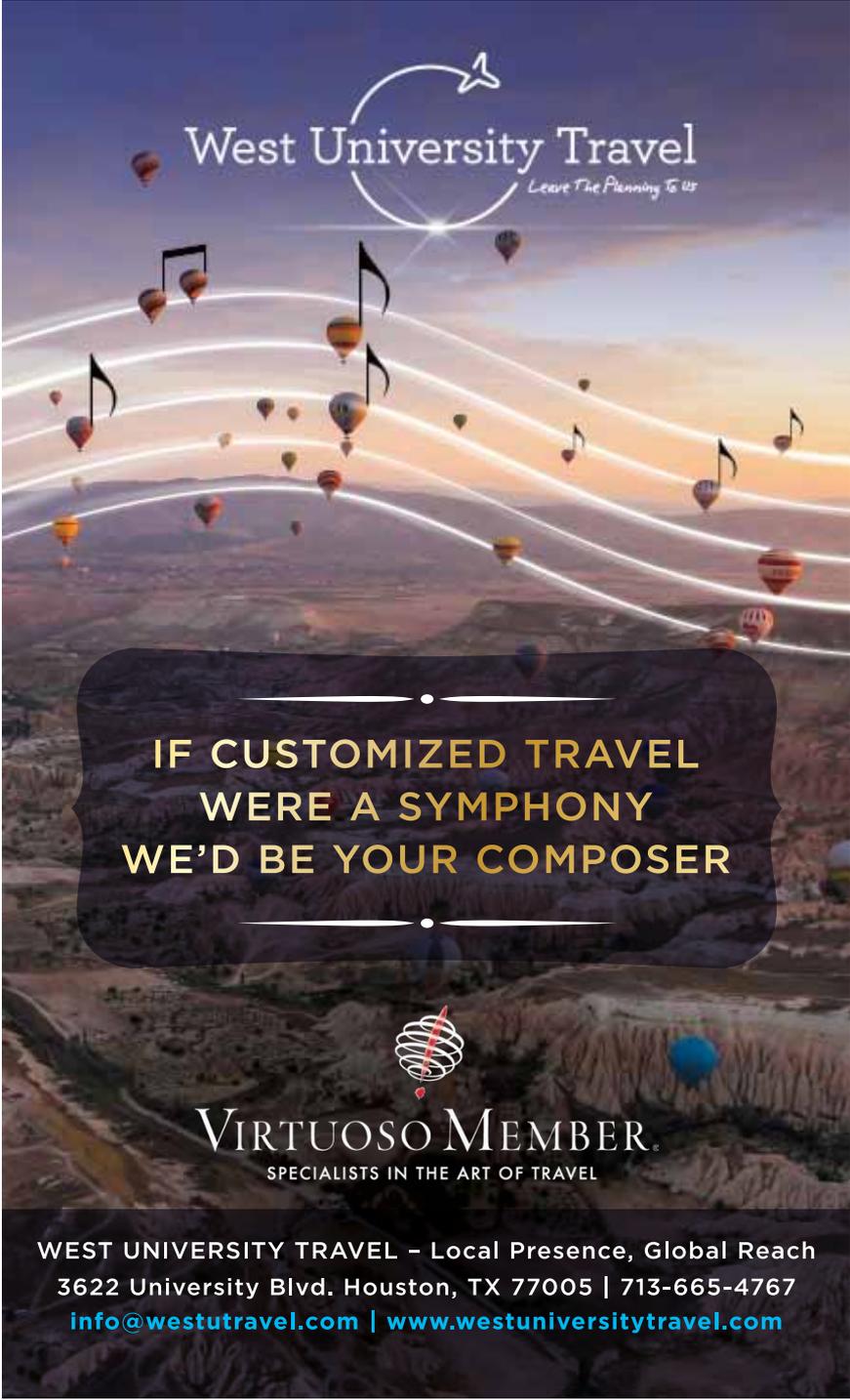
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